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BUNN
My Neighbor's Wife

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FRENCH'S
AMERICAN DRAMA.
The Acting Edition.
No. LXXXIII.

MY NEIGHBOR'S WIFE:

A FARCE, IN ONE ACT.

ADAPTED FROM THE FRENCH,

BY ALFRED BUNN, ESQ.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

A Description of the Costume—Cast of the Characters—Entrances and Exits—Relative Positions of the Performers on the Stage, and the whole of the Stage Business.

AS PERFORMED AT ALL THE PRINCIPAL THEATRES IN THE UNITED STATES.

NEW-YORK:
SAMUEL FRENCH,
121 NASSAU-STREET.

Cast of the Characters.—My Neighbor's Wife.

	C. Garden, London.	*B'dway Theatre, N.Y.*	*B'way Varieties, N.Y.*	*Walnut-st., Phila.*
Mr. Somerton, (an artist)	Mr. Cooper,	Mr. A. W. Fenno,	Miss Carrie,	Mr. Fitzgerald
" *Timothy Brown,* (a city broker)	" Meadows,	" W. A. Chapman.	Mast. Waldo,	" Hall,
" *Jonathan Smith,* (a tailor)	" Bartley,	" Whiting,	Geo W. Marsh,	" John Sefton.
Mrs. Somerton, } their respective	Miss Taylor,	Miss Harding,	Miss Jeanie,	Mrs Dickinson,
" *Brown,* } wives,	" Kenneth,	" J. Manners,	Miss Mary Marsh.	—— ——
" *Smith,* }	" Murray,	Mrs. Warren,	Miss Amelia,	" John Sefton

	Bar'ms Museum, N.Y.	*American, N. O.*	*Arch-street, Philad.*	*St. Louis.*
Mr. Somerton, (an artist)	M. Levick,	Mr. J. Prior,	Mr. Dolman,	Mr. Weston,
" *Timothy Brown,* (a city broker)	France,	" Barry,	" J. S. Clarke,	" Russell,
" *Jonathan Smith,* (a tailor)	J. Lingard.	" Porter,	" D. P. Bowers,	" C. L. Green.
Mrs. Somerton, } their respective	Miss Jackson,	Mrs. Kent,	Mrs. Hale,	Mrs. Farren.
" *Brown,* } wives,	Mrs. Palmer,	" Mueller,	" Langdon,	Miss Sylvia.
" *Smith,* }	" Burroughs,	Miss Porter,	Miss Baker,	Mrs. Russell.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

L. means *First Entrance, Left.* R. *First Entrance, Right.* S. E. L. *Second Entrance, Left.* S. E. R. *Second Entrance, Right.* U. E. L. *Upper Entrance, Left.* U. E. R. *Upper Entrance, Right.* C. *Centre.* L. C. *Left Centre.* R. C. *Right of Centre.* T. E. L. *Third Entrance, Left.* T. E. R. *Third Entrance, Right.* C. D. *Centre Door.* D. R. *Door Right.* D. L. *Door Left.* U. D. L. *Upper Door. Left.* U. D. R. *Upper Door, Right.*

*** *The Reader is supposed to be on the Stage, facing the Audience.*

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORN
SANTA BARBARA

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Costume.—My Neighbor's Wife.

SOMERTON—Evening dress.

SMITH—Green body coat, crimson velvet waistcoat, black stock, buff trowsers, large whiskers.

BROWN—Brown cloth body coat, white waistcoat, white cravat, black trowsers and gaiters, broad-brimmed hat.

THE LADIES—Fashionable walking dresses.

MY NEIGHBOR'S WIFE.

SCENE.—*A Chamber. At the first entrance,* R., *is a window, and at the second entrance a door, leading to an inner apartment. At the first entrance,* L., *is a small apartment, the inside of which is visible to the Audience. It is entered by a side door at* L. C., *with a window over it —a centre door in the flats—on one side is a painter's easel, with a picture on it—pistols crossed, hang up against the wall, near the window —a table partly laid out—chairs—a lady's work-table, surmounted by a looking-glass, containing plates, glasses, &c.*

MRS. SOMERTON, MRS. BROWN, *and* MRS. SMITH, *discovered.*

Mrs. Somer. (C.) Well, my dears, say what you will, I repeat it again —men are all monsters.

Mrs. B. All—except Mr. Brown.

Mrs. Smith. And Mr. Smith.

Mrs. Somer. (*Aside.*) Poor souls! If I were to tell them all. [*To them.*] Don't flatter yourselves too much; certainly I have every confidence in the affection and fidelity of my husband; but [*significantly,*] when I see what is going on in other establishments, I tremble for fear Mr. Somerton should be as deceitful as the rest of the world; and, notwithstanding appearances, I really would not swear to anything.

Mrs. Smith. There I have the advantage over you, Mrs. Somerton, for I swear Mr. Smith is faithful to me——

Mrs. B. And I'll take my oath, Mr. Brown is faithful to me.

Mrs. Somer. Really!

Mrs. Smith. I'm not all astonished at your being uneasy, my dear Mrs. Somerton, who have married a wild, giddy young man. It is not possible you could be otherwise; but Mr. Smith being a plain, steady tradesman, of a steady age——

Mrs. B. And Mr. Brown a city broker—never out of his counting-house, and one whose sole thoughts are on his business and his wife's happiness—he never does anything without consulting me

Mrs. Somer. Really!

Mrs. Smith. Then Mr. Smith is as modest, timid, and reserved as a

young girl, and would not dare to open his mouth without first asking my permission.

Mrs. B. It is this which makes me love Mr. Brown.

Mrs. Smith. And me adore Mr. Smith.

Mrs. B. [*To* MRS. SOMERTON.] But your husband, my dear, is too giddy and dissipated.

Mrs. Smith. And not half reserved enough in his conversation.

Mrs. B. And looking at all women with singular audacity. Oh, my dear Mrs. Somerton, really——

Mrs. Somer. My worthy neighbors, you are too good by half; but I don't want any one to be uneasy about me. [*They rise.*] I am very happy, believe me. I love my Somerton just as he is, with all his good qualities and all his failings; I never find fault with the friends of my husband, and prefer that he should be polite and attentive to all who visit us—even to you, my dears!

Mrs. B. } To us!
Mrs. Smith. }

Mrs. Somer. To be sure, for you know you are both very handsome.

Mrs. B. Oh!

Mrs. Smith. Oh!—You are too kind.

Mrs. Somer. Notwithstanding we are neighbors, you might be dangerous rivals. But I have no fear of you.

Mrs. B. You have no reason.

Mrs. Smith. No, none.

Mrs. Somer. Of course not; at the same time, I defy you, with all your charms and all your esprit, to make him inconstant. And, as friends and neighbors, I must speak very frankly to you, and tell you that instead of troubling yourselves so much about what is going on in my house, you should look a little more to your own. [*Aside.*] They won't easily get over that. [*Crosses to* R

Mrs. B. } To *ours?*
Mrs. Smith. }

Mrs. B. What can she mean?

Mrs. Smith. Why, my dear Mrs. Somerton, what are you thinking about?

Mrs Somer. Oh, nothing of any moment, or certainly—I most sincerely wish your husbands may *always* be faithful to you.

[*Significantly*

Mrs. B. But, my dear Mrs. Somerton, if you really know anything, you ought to tell us.

Mrs. Smith. Pray speak out.

Mrs. Somer. Oh, bless you, I know nothing—at least nothing positive, nothing more than—you know about *my* husband; therefore, my dear good people, suppose we change the subject. What are you both going to do to-night?

Mrs. B. Oh, I'm going home, to be sure!

Mrs. Smith. So am I.

Mrs. Somer. And I shall sup with Mr. Somerton.

[*Goes up to table,* R.

Mrs. B. And I with my dear Timothy.

Mrs. Smith. And I with my beloved Jonathan.

Mrs. Somer. Well, a good appetite, and a good supper.

[Mrs. Brown *and* Mrs. Smith *are about to go, when* Mrs. Somerton *stays them.*

But, I say—suppose by any chance, your husbands should not come home?

Mrs. B. [*Vehemently.*] What?

Mrs. Smith. [*Confidently.*] That is quite impossible. [*Going.*

Mrs. Somer. Well—I only said "suppose," and if they do not, you will find a knife and fork ready for you here.

Mrs. B. You are very kind.

Mrs. Smith. But don't make yourself uneasy, we shall have no reason to do that.

Mrs Somer. I hope not; however, you will find a hearty welcome; for I bear you no grudge, you see, for your attacks upon poor Somerton's fidelity.

Mrs. B. Oh! it's all nothing but neighbor's gossip. Adieu!

Mrs. Smith. Good night, my dear.

Mrs. Somer. Good bye, and don't forget; here's a plate for you, if you like to come back. [*Crosses to* R., *as they go up.*

Mrs. B. Ha, ha! [*Aside, as going out*] Poor thing! She knows her husband is gone out gallavanting. [*Exunt,* C. *and* R.

Mrs. Somer. There they go, a couple of poor silly dupes. I've put them in a bit of a fume, however; and it serves them right for coming and abusing my husband to my face. Thank Fortune, I'm not at all jealous, but I should like to revenge myself on these worthy people, for trying to *make* me so; and there could not be a better opportunity, for these two identical husbands have each written me a love letter. Now, the idea of two such fellows, with two such names as Jonathan Smith and Timothy Brown—the one a stock-broker of five-and-thirty, the other a tailor of forty—daring to write billet-doux to their neighbor's wife, is quite provocation enough—my husband is gone out to dinner, and was to have gone to the city ball afterwards, but I begged him to come home at eight to a minute; and, that we may keep the jest among ourselves, and not be the talk of the city, I have prudently given the servants a holiday, so that when Charles comes back, I must let him in myself, and I hope I shall be better able to answer than my neighbors for conjugal punctuality. [*A knocking heard.*] There he is, I'm sure.

[*Runs off at* C. *and* R., *returning with* Somerton

Somer. My dear, why did you open the door yourself—where are the servants?

Mrs. Somer. Never mind, they are all out.

Somer. All out?

Mrs. Somer. Yes, yes; but I thank you, my dear Charles, for coming home thus in good time.

Somer. It was your wish, my Caroline, and that was quite enough for me to obey it; but——

Mrs. Somer. But—but—I hope it has not put you out of your way.

Somer. Not at all, my dear; but I should, notwithstanding, like to

know why you have pressed me so urgently not to go to this ball, and to come home exactly at eight.

Mrs. Somer. You must first of all promise me faithfully that you will not fly in a passion with me, or be angry with any one else; but have a hearty laugh at what I'm going to tell you.

Somer. That's as it may happen.

Mrs. Somer. And that if you are determined to have revenge upon any one, you'll let me have the management of it.

Somer. I don't much like this opening.

Mrs. Somer. Well, you promise me all this?

Somer. Well, well, I will.

Mrs. Somer. Agreed, then. [*Taking a letter out of one of the pockets of her apron.*] Read that letter. [*Giving it to* SOMERTON.

Somer. [*Reading the letter.*] "Adorable Caroline,"—what?—who is this impudent scoundrel?

Mrs. Somer. You forget your promise, Charles, and are in a passion already—come, read on.

Somer. [*Reading.*] "Adorable Caroline,—Your derision and cruelty have preyed upon my heart, and caused it the deepest anguish. I am most anxious to tell you all I feel before I fly from you for ever; and as your husband is going this evening to the city ball, grant me the delightful favor of an interview. If I do not receive an answer from you, I will be under your window a little after eight, and will clap my hands three times as a signal, to let you know I am there; when I hope you will not refuse to receive the last farewell of your disconsolate—*Timothy.*" Timothy! What! Timothy Brown, the broker, my next door neighbor?

Mrs Somer. The very man!

Somer. Why, the impudent vagabond—with his mild manners and placid countenance! But there *is* no trusting to appearances.

Mrs. Somer. But this is not all, my dear Charles—read this!

[*Taking another letter out of the other pocket, and giving it him.*

Somer. Another?

Mrs. Somer. Yes: but pray make haste and read.

Somer. [*Reading.*] "Incomparable and inexorable beauty! I am above all duplicity, and prefer candidly and at once opening my heart, rather than adopting any circuitous method. Since I first knew you I have almost ceased to know myself, and my heart will break unless I can relieve it by a personal confession; I, therefore, implore you to grant me an interview. I understand your husband is going to the city ball to-night. About a quarter after eight, you will hear under your window the sound of my flute, and if you will only deign to open it, it will convince me you are not inflexible. I shall bring with me some nice things for a quiet supper, which I have expressly ordered from Birch's, as a slight proof of the devotion of your attached—Jonathan." What! that damned tailor, my other next-door neighbor. Why, the tailor is even more impudent than the broker!

Mrs. Somer. Now, is it not much better to laugh at these coxcombs, than to fly in a passion with them?

Somer. But what do you propose?

Mrs. Somer. First of all, that you go out.

Somer. What! Go out?

Mrs. Somer. That is indispensable: and as soon as you are gone I will receive them.

Somer. But you must explain.

Mrs. Somer. I will receive them, and then——

Somer. And then! What then?

Mrs. Somer. [*Taking a book from lady's work table, and giving it to* SOMERTON.] Here take this volume, it is La Fontaine, and at the bottom of this page, [*pointing with her finger*] you will read all I want you to do.

Somerton. [*Glancing over it.*] Oh, I understand—I take, and will follow implicitly your instructions.

Mrs. Somer. It's settled then?

Somer. Quite. [*Three claps of the hand are heard,* R.] That's the broker to a certainty.

Mrs. Somer. And to his time.

Somer. Then I'll slip down the back staircase.

[SOMERTON *goes out at the door,* R. 1 E.

Mrs. Somer. Now then to receive my beaux—but I must first set myself all in apple-pie order; [*going to the glass*] for, notwithstanding we despise people, we ought always to appear before them to the best advantage. [*Arranging herself before the glass, and speaking.*] Mrs. Somerton, I think you are looking very well to-night. [*A knock,* R. U. E.] I'm coming. There's nothing like keeping one's lover in a little suspense. [*Knock again.*] Coming, coming. Bless me, he's very impatient. There, now I'm all right: and now for opening the door. [*Knock again.*

She goes off, C. *and* R., *returning with* MR. BROWN.

Oh, it's you, Mr. Brown.

Brown. At last, my cruel Caroline, I behold you. I almost feared you would refuse me admittance.

Mrs. Somer. What? Do you think yourself so very dangerous then?

Brown. Not that; but you can, I hope, make some allowance for the feelings of an anxious lover.

Mrs. Somer. You must not talk in that manner; for if any one should overhear you—[*Sound of a flute is heard under the window,* L. 2 E.

Brown. Why that's a flute, and very like the tune that our neighbor Smith is so perpetually playing.

Mrs. Somer. The very same. [*Aside.*] And the signal mentioned in his letter. [*Opens the window, then says to* BROWN.] He's coming to spend the evening with us.

Brown. With us? Oh, Caroline! Caroline, this is cruel of you.

Mrs. Somer. Cruel, indeed: why, what do you take me for? In the absence of my husband, to remain alone with a man; and [*sneeringly*] such a captivating young man as you, Mr. Brown? Oh, no, I could not think of such a thing.

Brown. Then this is only to save appearances.

Mrs. Somer. Oh, nothing more.

Brown. [*Aside.*] Well then I must put up with it; but it is devilish unpleasant for all that.

Enter SMITH *on tiptoe, with a flute in one hand, and carrying in the other a basket with sundry provisions.*

Smith. [*Looking in.*] The door left open; it is evident then she expects me. Are you alone, my pretty Caroline? [*Advances.*

Mrs. Somer. Oh, no; Mr. Brown is here—come on purpose to keep us company.

Smith. (R.) Brown!

Brown. (L.) At your service—if I can be of the slightest use to you.

Smith. Certainly, I'm delighted. [*Aside.*] The devil take him, say I. [*To* MRS. SOMERTON.] When is he going? I suppose he does not sup with us?

Mrs. Somer. To be sure he does. [*Alternately to one and the other.*] My husband, you know, has gone to the city ball to-night; and I stay at home with two of his friends; if I was with one only, they might raise ill reports of me: but with two even slander itself can say nothing.

Smith. Oh, certainly; you are very right. [*Aside.*] This fellow Brown is invited I see, as a sort of go-between, and cloak to cover our proceedings: luckily, he is a great fool, and I can turn him about to my purpose as I please.

Brown. This damned fellow, Smith, is always in the way——

Smith. My dear friend—glad to see you. [*To* BROWN.

Brown. You are very kind.

Smith. Come, make yourself useful, and help me to open my provision store.

Mrs. Somer. Ay, so do, and here's a table nearly ready to receive all.

Smith. [*To* BROWN.] Well, prepare the table for some of Birch's very best. [*Aside to* MRS. SOMERTON.] You beauty, I adore you more than ever.

Mrs. Somer. Are you mad?

Smith. Yes I am, and you have made me so.

Mrs. Somer. Be quiet—hold your tongue. [*He advances up the stage.*

Brown. [*Leaving the table and coming on down the* L. *side of* MRS. SOMERTON.] What is that he is saying to you?—Is he making love to you?

Mrs. Somer. Quite the contrary; he is telling me I ought to listen to you.

Brown. Oh! then it's all right!

Mrs. Somer. [*Going to the table.*] The knives and forks are wanted. I'll go for them in the next room, and at the same time order coffee and liqueurs to be got ready.

Brown. Pray do not trouble yourself.

Smith. She's right; it's all the fashion now——

[MRS. SOMERTON *goes out at door,* R. 1 E.—SMITH *is about to follow her.*]

Brown. [*Pulling him back by the coat tail.*] Isn't she a delightful creature?

Smith. What are you talking about?

Brown. [*As* SMITH *is again about to follow* MR. SOMERTON, *takes him by the arm, and brings him forward*] Now, my dear fellow, you can help me in a most essential manner with her.

Smith. Help you?

Brown. And if you will rely on my gratitude——

Smith. Why, my friend, I think you are out of your mind.

Brown. How?

Smith. Why, I calculated on you to plead my cause with Miss Somerton——

Brown. On me?

Smith. That is, if you wish to preserve my good opinion.

Brown. You love her, then?

Smith. That I do.

Brown. So do I, a hundred times more than you do!

Smith. You fellow!—love her!—I'd have you to know——

[*Follows him to* L.

Brown. And I'd have you to know—if, sir, you have the audacity only to think—— [*Follows him to* R.

Mrs. Somer. [*Without.*] Now, then, here they are——

Smith. She's coming; so pray be silent before her.

Enter MRS. SOMERTON, R. 1 E.

Mrs. Somer. Now, gentlemen, to supper.

Both. Aye, to supper!

Brown. I shall have an eye on that fellow. [*Aside.*

Smith. [*Aside.*] I shan't lose sight of you, Mr. Brown, I promise you.

Brown. Smith, my dear fellow, give me your hand—a thousand thanks!

Smith. Why, what's the man thanking me for?

Mrs. Somer. Why, for the handsome supper to which you have invited him.

Smith. It is not to me, but yourself, my dear Mrs. Somerton, to whom all thanks are due.

Mrs Somer. Oh, no! to you.

Brown. To you both—you, my charming madam, [*To* MRS. SOMERTON] and you, my good friend—to you both.

Smith. The man's a fool! [*Going to table*—MRS SOMERTON *sits at table, with* BROWN *on her right hand, and* SMITH *on her left hand.*]

Mrs. Somer. Well, really, this is delightful—by the side of those we love, and opposite to those we esteem—surely man can desire no more!

Brown. After all, I flatter myself I am the man. [*Aside.*

Mrs. Somer. Now, gentlemen, pray help yourselves.

Brown. I will first propose a toast—"Here's to the beautiful Caroline."

Smith. "To the beautiful Caroline;"—the rascal there has got the start of me. [*As they are about to fill their glasses, a knocking is heard without,* R]

Mrs. Somer. Bless me, who can be knocking at this hour?

Brown. It's very odd——

Smith. And very unpleasant.

Somer. [*Without.*] Caroline, my dear, open the door to me.

Mrs. Somer. It's my husband! I'm lost!

Brown. I wish I was——

Smith. I'm a dead man.

Mrs. Somer. But what's to be done?—hide yourselves, in mercy's sake!

Smith. It's very well to *say* hide, but where? [*Rises.*

Mrs. Somer. [*Pointing to the chamber,* L.] There, in that little closet—make haste—I'm half dead. [*In a loud voice.*] Coming, Charles, coming, my dear. [*To* BROWN *and* SMITH.] Keep silent or we're ruined.

They enter door of the closet, as she goes off, C., *and lets in* SOMERTON.

Somer. [*Advancing.*] This is not very kind treatment, my dear, to keep me waiting in this manner.

Mrs. Somer. Don't be angry, Charles; the fact is, I did not expect you home so early.

Brown. [*In chamber.*] How her voice trembles.

Smith. [*In chamber.*] Enough to make it.

Mrs. Somer. [*In a low voice, and pointing to the closet.*] There they are.

Somer. Capital. [*Aloud.*] I don't intend, my dear, to go to this ball to-night.

Brown and Smith. Oh! [*A sort of mutual groan.*

Somer. What noise is that, love?

Mrs. Somer. I heard nothing——

[*Both scarcely able to smother their laughter.*

Smith. [*To* BROWN.] Don't breathe, or we're dead men.

Brown. I'm dumb.

Somer. [*Looking at the table.*] You don't appear to have been very disconsolate at my absence, my dear, to judge by the display on your table—patties, lobsters, tarts, jellies, wine——

Mrs. Somer. Why, yes, my dear—and no—why, that is——

Somer. That is what, my dear?

Mrs. Somer. Why, I had invited two ladies, our next-door neighbors.

Somer. What! Mrs. Smith?

Smith. My wife!

Mrs. Somer. And Mrs. Brown.

Brown. My wife!

Smith. Leave these women alone for getting out of a scrape.

Brown. And perhaps for getting us into one. } [*Inside chamber.*

Somer. So, my dear, you have invited two neighbors? I'm very glad to hear of it. Run in, love, and fetch them, and say that supper is ready, and we are waiting for them.

Mrs. Somer. I'll step in at once——

Somer. Ay, do.

Mrs. Somer. And bring them in instantly.

As she goes out at D. F., SOMERTON *lays another knife and fork, and puts the table in order.*

Smith. *My* wife will not come, I'm sure.

Brown. Nor mine either, for she expects me home.

Somer. There, that will do; I shall sit here, between Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Brown, and my wife opposite to me.

[*Goes up the stage, brings down his pistols, and loads them.*

Smith. Well, he's taking it very coolly.

Somer. I'm not altogether comfortable in my mind, for when I came in, it struck me that my wife looked extremely embarrassed——

Brown. But what is he doing there?

Smith. I don't know—I'll peep through the key-hole. Why, as I'm alive, he's loading his pistols.

Brown. Then he has certainly seen us.

Smith. Hold your tongue, Brown, or he'll stop it for you.

Somer. [*Talking to himself but loud enough to be heard by* BROWN *and* SMITH.] And a thought came into my head, that if she could—but that is impossible, for I am sure she loves me: besides, she well knows that if I were to surprise any man here at this hour, if he were the dearest friend I have on earth, I'd blow his brains out on the spot. [*He is pacing the stage, and stops by the little closet where* BROWN *and* SMITH *are concealed, as he says the latter part of the sentence: they bob down their heads at his approach—he then seats himself by the table.*]

Smith. [*Lifting up his head.*] Did you hear what he said?

Brown. Yes: but it won't bear repeating.

Somer. I'll load them both with a couple of bullets. Thank Fortune, that touch of jealousy was but momentary; I have no right to suspect my Caroline—and at this moment I ought to be especially grateful to her for inviting our two neighbors, particularly one of them, who is the most amiable and delightful woman on earth.

Smith. That's *my* wife!

Brown. No; mine.

Somer. And I have been in love with her for a long time without daring to tell her so——

Smith. If he's in love with her, it *is* yours.

Brown. No; yours.

Somer. However, to-day I feel a little more nerve and impudence in my composition, and I'll contrive some opportunity of declaring myself—so, my next door neighbor, I'd advise you to be on the look out. Now, let us put these out of harm's way in the closet.

[*He goes toward the closet,* R., *and is about to open it.*

Smith. He is coming here!

Brown. Then we are a brace of dead men.

Mrs. Somer. [*Outside.*] Come, my dear friends, this way—this way——

Somer. Oh the charmers! Here they come!

Puts his pistols in a chair, and goes off C. *and* R., BROWN *and* SMITH *cautiously open the closet door, and peep out.*

Brown. At present we are well out of that!

Smith. Yes; if he don't come back. Every bit of my skin is like goose's flesh. [*They retreat.*

Enter MRS. SOMERTON, *with* MRS. BROWN *in one hand, and* MRS. SMITH *in the other.*

Somer. Ladies, most welcome!

Mrs. B. Good evening, Mrs. Somerton.

Brown. That's my wife—the coquette!

Mrs. Smith. Mr. Somerton, your most obedient.

Smith. And that's mine—the monster!

Mrs. Somer. My dear Charles, our friends hesitated coming, for a moment, for fear of displeasing their husbands, but I assured them you would plead their cause before them.

Mrs. B.
Mrs. Smith. } And we have only come on that condition.

Somer. Willingly, most willingly—I was going to the city ball to-night, but I feel no regret at having abandoned its attractions, since it has procured me the pleasure of passing the evening with you. Will you allow me to offer you a hand?

Takes MRS. BROWN *in one hand, and* MRS. SMITH *in the other, and places them at the table on each side of himself*—MRS. SOMERTON *opposite.*

Smith. Why, they are going to eat up my supper!

Brown. And I am dying with hunger.

Somer. [*Tasting the paté and recommending it.*] This paté is excellent, I assure you.

Smith. It ought to be, it cost me half a guinea.

Somer Will you allow me the pleasure, charming MRS. Smith?

Brown. Did you hear that! [*Aside.*] Poor Smith!

Mrs. Somer. My dear Charles, I am the only one you have forgotten.

Somer. True, my love, but hospitality to our friends made me for a moment forgetful.

[*They drink, help each other, and seem to enjoy their supper.*

Brown. I don't hear a word.

Smith. How the devil can they speak when all their mouths are chuck full?

Brown. I should like, at all events, to see what they're about.

Smith. There's a window, let us get up on the table.

They put up a table against the door, and two chairs on the table, then open the small window, at which they occasionally appear and disappear, the Audience seeing what they are doing through the large front window.

Somer. Well, really, this is one of the most delightful evenings I ever enjoyed.

Mrs. Smith. And, and to tell you the truth, it's very pleasant now and then to be away from the restraint of one's husband.

Smith. [*At the window.*] Very, no doubt.

Mrs. B. And to enjoy a friend's society without any low and vulgar suspicions.

Brown. Very pleasant truly. I say, the supper smells nice, don't it!

Smith. Your wife seems to think so, for she's making a tolerable good example of it. Brown, have an eye to your wife.

Brown. Smith, have an eye to your forehead.

Somer. My dear Caroline, we ought to be obliged by your kind attention and good supper, but it seems to me there is one thing still wanting.

Mrs. Somer. What is that, Charles?

Somer. Why I dare say our friends would like one glass of Champagne just by way of a wind up.

Mrs. Somer. Very true, Charles.

Mrs. B. Champagne! we have some capital Champagne, at home—but my husband, a niggardly fellow, always locks it up, and never offers any one a drop; if you will wait a minute, I'll run in and fetch two or three bottles.

Brown. Precious little devil!

Smith. Hold your tongue, man.

Somer. You shall not go alone; allow me to escort you.

Brown. Why the fellow offers his arm to my wife.

Mrs. Somer. By no means, I will go with you, my dear Mrs. Brown, and Charles shall stay and keep Mrs. Smith company.

Smith. So much the better, then she'll be under my own eye.

Mrs. B. Come along, my dear, we'll be back in a moment; but mind, my husband must know nothing about it.

They go off at C. D., *followed to the door by* SOMERTON *and* MRS. SMITH.

Brown. The baggage—I'll murder her.

Pokes his body half out of the window, and is pulled back by SMITH, *an action they alternately repeat, until* SOMERTON *and* MRS. SMITH *have advanced.*

Smith. Be quiet, Brown.

Brown. I'll be the death of her.

Smith. We shall be the death of one another, if you don't be silent.

Somer. At length, my dear Mrs. Smith, we are alone.

Mrs. Smith. And what then, my dear sir?

Somer. What, can you not guess?

Mrs. Smith. No.

Smith. Why, what the devil is going to happen now?

Brown. Hush! be quiet, Smith. Do you see Somerton whispering to your wife?

Smith. Whispering proves nothing.

Somer. [*Going nearer to* MRS. SMITH.] I have sought this delightful *tête-à-tête* for many a long day past.

Mrs. Smith. [*Drawing herself up.*] Sir, do you know to whom you are addressing yourself?

Smith. That's a settler for him. [*Aside at window.*

Somer. To the most beautiful, most adored, yet most cruel of her sex.

Mrs. Smith. You greatly astonish me—this is the first time you ever——

Somer. If my lips have been silent, surely my looks must have made you acquainted with this passion, that will end only with my life.

Mrs. Smith. Pray think no more of me—remember I'm married.

Smith. Charming creature—isn't she, Brown?

Somer. Oh, I know that; but to whom?—a fellow not capable of appreciating your numerous attractions—a low person altogether unworthy of your matchless beauty and innumerable charms.

Smith. What's that he says, Brown?

Brown. Be silent, I tell you.

Mrs. Smith. My husband is certainly very inattentive sometimes.

Somer. To be sure he is—a scoundrel!

Mrs. Smith. Often absent from home.

Somer. Abominable!

Mrs. Smith. And I must admit his manners are not particularly polished.

Brown. I say, Smith—she seems to have studied you pretty well.

Smith. I'll poison her—my manners, indeed!

Mrs. Smith. And he has not much of the man of fashion about him.

Somer. He's a positive lout.

Smith. I'll poison her.

Mrs. Smith. But still he is my husband, and I ought——

Somer. You ought only to think of a love the most tender, and the most impassioned. Behold me, dearest, at your feet.

Mrs. Smith. Rise, pray.

Smith. and Brown. On his knees!

Mrs. Smith. [*Aside.*] Poor Mrs. Somerton, who was so sure of her dear Charles' heart, and defied us to make him inconstant.

Somer. What says, my love—my darling?

Mrs. Smith. Oh nothing—nothing—rise, pray, pray—leave me!

Smith. The abominable creature! She's giving way.

Brown. It's like 'em all—except Mrs. Brown.

Somer. [*Kissing her hand.*] You divine creature, grant me one favor—my demand is not a very exorbitant one—give me this boquet, here in your bosom, as a pledge of your affection.

[*He takes a boquet out of her bosom*

Mrs. Smith. Pray—pray leave me.

Smith. There, he has taken her boquet.

Mrs. Somerton. [*Outside.*] Come along, give me one of the bottles.

Somer. They are coming back.

Brown. High time, eh, Smith!

Smith. I'm suffocated; I shall choke with rage.

[*During the whole of this scene,* BROWN *had been pulling back* SMITH *by the coat, who was putting his head out too forward.*

MRS. BROWN, *entering with* MRS. SOMERTON, C.

Mrs. B. Here they are, and we have picked out a couple of the very best in the cellar. [*They all sit again at table.*] That's right, my dear; that's just how I always serve Mr. Smith.

Smith. [*At window.*] Oh, dear! oh, Lord!

Somer. Well, now we've got his wine, we had better make use of it; and the least we can do is to drink Brown's good health.

All. With all my heart—here's Brown's health!

Mrs. B. Timothy Brown, your very good health.

Brown. [*At window.*] Thank ye, and be d—d to you. Oh, my very best Champagne!

Somer. It's really excellent; and as long as we haven't Brown's company, the more of this sparkling champagne we have, the more agreeable.

Brown. You're very good.

Somer. And now, allow me to propose Mr. Smith's health.

[*They drink*

Mrs. Somer. Now suppose we go in the next room, and take a cup of coffee? [*They rise.*

Somer. A very good idea. Ladies, allow me to offer you each a hand.

Mrs. Somer. Aye, and do follow me.

[MRS. SOMERTON *goes out at door,* R. 1 E., *followed by* SOMERTON, *between* MRS. SMITH *and* MRS. BROWN. *As soon as they are gone,* BROWN *and* SMITH *get down, and replace the chairs and table, which they had placed against the doors. They then come out, and pace the stage in a furious manner.*

Smith. Perfidious woman! who would ever have thought it?

Brown. My dear fellow, don't run about in this manner; be calm, and let us talk it over. [*Pacing the stage furiously.*

Smith. I'm half mad, Brown.

Brown. No wonder—so would I be, if I were you.

Smith. It's monstrous.

Brown. Infamous—shocking—ha, ha, ha!

Smith. What the devil are you laughing at?

Brown. My dear fellow, I'm not laughing; it's an hysterical sympathy with your situation. [*Aside.*] Poor Smith! Who was so sure of the virtue of his wife. Upon my soul, I can't help laughing if I were to die for it. [*To* SMITH.] Pray pardon me; but I really cannot help it.

[*Noise,* R. 1 E.

Smith. Hush—somebody's coming! Help to replace the chairs and—— [*They replace them.*

Brown. Pshaw! 'Tis all fancy. So suppose, now, while they are at their coffee in the next room, we sit down here and pick a bit, and take the liberty of making free with some of my own dear wine.

Smith. Thank you, I'm not hungry

Brown. But I am; for I've had nothing to take away my appetite; and really this paté of yours, Smith—[*He goes to the table, cuts a bit of the paté, and is just about to eat, when the door opens.*] By all the saints in the calendar, here's my wife coming! [*He hides under the table.*

Smith. His wife!

[*He hides himself behind the easel, on which a picture is.*

Enter MRS. BROWN, *speaking as she enters the door,* R. 2 E.

Mrs. B. Now do allow me, while you are finishing your coffee. I'll go and clear the supper table, and put all in order. [*Coming forward.*] Well, I must confess that Mrs. Smith is a terrible flirt.

Smith. [*Behind easel.*] There's no doubt whatever of that.

Mrs. B. What looks she has been glancing toward Somerton. I really blushed for her.

Brown. [*Putting out his head from under the table.*] My dear little wife, I'd give you a kiss if I dared.

Mrs. B. At the same time, I must confess that Somerton is very agreeable, and also that he has——

Brown. Not so fast, ma'am, if you please.

Smith. They are birds of a feather, that's evident.

Mrs. B. He has also a fine figure, and a good expression of counte nance.

Brown. [*Putting his head out.*] It's a damned lie!

SOMERTON *steals softly in at* R. 2 E.

Mrs. B. But I cannot understand how he could have such bad taste as to make love to Mrs. Smith, a woman altogether so unworthy of him; that is a thing I really never can forgive him for.

Smith. Nor I either

Somer. [*Touching* MRS. BROWN'S *shoulder.*] What, still inflexible.

Mrs. B. [*Starting.*] Oh, Mr. Somerton! you quite frighten me.

Somer. Fear! Oh, fear is not the sentiment with which I would inspire you!

Smith. [*Popping his head from behind the easel, at the same time that* BROWN *puts his head from under the table, and seems in a violent rage.*] It's your turn now, Brown.

Mrs B. [*To* SOMERTON.] I suppose you think you are addressing Mrs. Smith!

Somer. Mrs. Smith! I detest her very name—I cannot endure the sight of her; and if I seemed to pay her any particular attention, it was only to divert the thoughts of one who knows too well who is the object of my affection.

Mrs. B. I really do not understand you, sir!

Somer. The moments are precious—only say that some day you will bless my vows—name some time when I may hope, and till then, give me some slight token of one I can never cease to love—promise me this, adorable woman!

Brown. Familiar rascal!

Smith. This is worse than what he said to Mrs. Smith.

Somer. What, silent! dearest one! then give me this bracelet, twined

around your arm. [*takes bracelet from her arm.*]

Mrs. B. Oh! pray give it me back. [*here* BROWN *shakes his fist at her.*] If my husband were but to see it!

Brown. He must be damned blind if he didn't!

Somer. Oh! don't think of him—dear, kind creature! give me but one kiss.

Mrs. B. Sir! really, sir—this audacity——

Somer. There's no harm, dear, in a kiss. [*gives her several kisses, against which she slightly struggles.*]

Smith. [*chuckling.*] How they sound!

Brown. The traitoress!

Mrs. B. [*struggling with* SOMERTON.] Oh, if my husband were to hear him.

Smith. He must be damned deaf if he don't.

[MRS. BROWN *gets away from him with some difficulty, and runs into the chamber,* R 1 E.]

Somer. She is a charming creature! and I decidedly give her the preference.

Smith. I'm glad of it—the scoundrel!

Brown. Oh! the blackguard!

Somer. However, they are both devilish nice girls, and will answer one's purpose very well to pass an hour or two with now and then—altogether, we've had a delightful evening, and I must now go and put by my pistols, which I had quite forgotten. [*goes and takes pistols off the chair.*] Oh, Mr. Smith, Mr. Brown!—Mr. Brown, Mr. Smith, I strongly suspect I shall give you both a violent headache!

[*Exit into closet,* R 1 E.

Brown. [*looking out.*] Pheugh!—where is he gone?

Smith. [*peeping on one side of the glass.*] Hold your tongue; there he is with those damned pistols again.

Here SOMERTON *closes up the window, goes towards the door,* R. 2 E., *pointing laughingly at the table, and exit.*

Smith. [*peeping out.*] Brown!

Brown. [*looking up.*] Smith!

Smith. We are a pretty couple.

Brown. Very. Give me your hand. [*they come out and embrace each other.*]

Smith. Oh, Mrs. Brown!

Brown. Oh, Mrs. Smith!

Smith. Oh, that bracelet!

Brown. Oh, that bouquet!

Smith.
Brown. } [*forcing a laugh.*] Ha, ha, ha!

Smith. It's exceedingly droll.

Brown. And extremely pleasant.

Smith. But I'll be revenged, Brown.

Brown. And so will I. Give me your hand; we'll have a mutual alliance, and come to a determination to take ample revenge.

Smith. Let us embrace again [*they embrace.*] Now, my mind's made up,

Brown. I was beginning to despair, but I'm nerved again—we'll treat them exactly as they deserve.

Smith. The idea of making such a fuss, and talking of cutting our throats, about one's wife's virtue.

Brown. Particularly when she hasn't got any.

Smith. Let us turn philosophers, Brown, and satisfy ourselves with knowing that half the world are like ourselves.

Brown. To be sure. Besides, after all, it's a thing that if you don't know, it's of no consequence; and if you do you can't help yourself.

Smith. Hush! they are coming back.

Brown. And our hiding places are cut off.

Smith. Very true; what is to be done?

Brown. They are coming this way to a certainty. [*he runs under the dressing gown on the arm chair.*]

Smith. Here they are, sure enough. [*he runs under the uniform hanging on the portmanteau in the chair.*]

Enter SOMERTON, MRS. SOMERTON, MRS. SMITH, *and* MRS. BROWN, *at door*, R. 2 E.

Somer. And you really will go, then?

Mrs. Somer. Oh, pray, don't think of going yet.

Mrs. B. We really must—it's ten o'clock, and past.

Mrs. Smith. And I really tremble for fear my husband should have reached home.

Mrs. Somer. I rather think not.

Mrs. Smith. However, they both may be, and although they should happen to be a little sulky, it is as well not to displease them too much.

Somer. Now listen to me. If on your return your husbands should pick a quarrel with you, I'll tell you both a way to make them silent.

Mrs. B. } What is it?
Mrs. Smith. }

Somer. To tell them——

Mrs. B. } [*eagerly.*] Well, what!
Mrs. Smith. }

Somer. A circumstance that happened the other day to one of my most intimate friends.

Mrs. Somer. And to his wife?

Somer. Yes Well, this friend had two neighbors—

Smith. Brown!

Brown. Smith!

Mrs. Somer. Which neighbors had two wives.

Mrs. B. } Oh! wives—well.
Mrs. Smith. }

Somer. These two neighbors had a great desire to seduce the affection of my friend's wife. [*All here are silent, and paying deep attention.*

Mrs. Somer. Which she immediately mentioned to her husband.

Somer. And he, bent on having his revenge on them, determined to seduce the affection of both their wives, in return.

Smith and Brown. Oh!

MRS. SMITH *and* MRS. BROWN *look confusedly at one another.*

Somer. Yes; and in concert with his wife, got up a capital farce with the two ladies. He alternately made the most desperate love to them, vowing eternal fondness to one, and perpetual constancy to the other; and, in return for all his apparent devotion, he received from one, in token of her regard, a beautiful bouquet.

Mrs. Smith. [*Aside.*] A bouquet!

Mrs. Somer. And from the other a —— What was it? Oh, I remember, a bracelet.

Mrs. B. [*Aside.*] A bracelet!

Somer. But the most extraordinary part of the whole business was—that all this took place in the very presence of their husbands!

Mrs. Smith. What——

Mrs. B. In their presence? [*Looking anxiously round.*

Somer. Yes, in the presence of the husbands, who dared not say a word, because they were, in the first instance, the guilty party.

Smith. I'm all amazement!

Brown. I'm worse than that—I don't know what I am!

Mrs. B. Perhaps these two ladies were not quite as culpable as you represent them, Mr. Somerton?

Somer. Undoubtedly not; for I ought to add, to their honor and credit, that they were in the secret, and only assisted the scheme to teaze their husbands. [*To* MRS. SOMERTON.] We may as well give them the benefit of this lie, my dear, to prevent any further mischief between them and their husbands.

Mrs. Somer. Oh, to be sure—to be sure. [*To* MRS. SMITH *and to* MRS. BROWN.] Oh, yes, it was only a neighbor's frolic—a game of tit-for-tat, very cleverly played.

[MRS. SMITH *and* MRS. BROWN *appear to recover a little.*

Smith. Is it possible?

Brown. I breathe again.

Mrs. Somer. And the matter ended in the two husbands coming from their hiding places, falling on their knees, and asking pardon of their wives for all their transgressions.

[SMITH *and* BROWN, *who have now partially quitted the back, advance—and fall on their knees on each side.*

Mrs. B. What do I see? Mr. Brown?

Mrs. Smith. And Mr. Smith! I shall faint.

Smith. (R.) Pardon, pardon, my love, for all my little offences.

Brown. (L.) And pardon, Mrs. Brown, for all my piccadilloes.

Mrs. Brown. The forgiveness should be mutual—we have both been a little to blame; but as no harm has arisen out of it, why, come to my arms, my dear Timothy!

Mrs. Smith. Ditto, ditto, my dear Jonathan.

Somer. This is the exact termination of my friend's adventure; he gave back to each lady her respective property—to one the bouquet, and to the other the bracelet, [*here* SOMERTON *presents the one to* MRS. SMITH, *the other to* MRS. BROWN,] and heartily forgave his two neighbors for the folly of attempting to make love to his wife.

Mrs. Somer. And all parties being reconciled, they finally agreed to

confine their devotions to their own firesides, and never, for the future to interfere with THEIR NEIGHBOR'S WIFE.

Smith. Brown?

Brown. Smith!

Smith. Will you ever?

Brown. No, I'll never.

MR. SOMERTON. MRS. SOMERTON.

0 c.

MR. SMITH. MRS. SMITH. MR. BROWN. MRS. BROWN

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